

more than bump up against the rights of whistleblowers. It, in fact, is going to be a chill. It will chill executive branch employees from sharing information with Congress in our congressional obligation of oversight.

It could also be construed to be an attempt to limit Members of Congress from conducting this constitutional duty. I wrote to President Obama last Friday raising my concerns with his signing statement, and, most importantly, the chilling effect that it will have on whistleblower communication with Congress.

Today, I have not received a response. However, I read in the New York Times on March 16 that an unnamed administration official stated that President Obama is "committed to whistleblower protections," and that the administration "had no intention of going further than did Presidents Bill Clinton and George Bush in signing statements concerning similar provisions."

Then, what is that word "confidential" doing in there? However, that same official did not provide any detail on that additional term "confidential." I would like President Obama to answer my letter soon and clarify exactly what he meant in this signing statement. Absent a more detailed response from President Obama, I cannot see how his signing statement can be reconciled with the pledges and promises made by Candidate Obama, nor can I reconcile the criticism issued by Candidate Obama about President Bush's use of signing statements with the statements made by that unnamed administration source in the New York Times.

The unnamed source said President Obama "had no intention of going further than did President Clinton or George Bush in signing statements." Candidate Obama stated he would not use signing statements in a manner similar to President Bush to circumvent the will of Congress. Now a member of the administration is telling the New York Times that President Obama means to do exactly the same thing as President Bush in issuing signing statements.

It seems to me, if this is the case, Candidate Obama would have a problem with President Obama's use of signing statements to underline the intent of this appropriations rider on whistleblowers.

Now, a number of my colleagues were quick to object to signing statements issued by President Bush but somehow have so far remained silent regarding President Obama's use of signing statements. Well, to those who had concerns in the past, I encourage you to take a close look at this signing statement and the potential harm it will cause for Members of Congress doing our constitutional responsibility of oversight to see that the laws are faithfully executed.

Those who may believe my acts are motivated by partisan politics, I want

you to look at my record and see that I have repeatedly objected to signing statements that hindered the rights of whistleblowers. Just one example: I objected to a signing statement issued by President Bush back in 2002 that restricted the application of whistleblower protection provisions included in Sarbanes-Oxley.

I also, as another example, objected when a signing statement was issued by President Bush impacting specific reforms contained in the Inspector General Reform Act of 2008.

In closing, I call upon President Obama to revisit the March 11 signing statement and implement sections 714(1) and (2) in a manner consistent with the spirit and intent of this legislation.

As a former Senator, he must recognize the good that whistleblowers do by speaking out and by shedding light on fraud, waste, and abuse in Government agencies and programs.

Candidate Obama supported whistleblowers, but based upon his recent signing statements, these campaign promises now ring hollow. I hope I have interpreted him wrongly and will give him an opportunity to set the record right because I hope he comes out the same way he did in the campaign: strictly in support of whistleblowers, who are an essential element of the process of our checks and balances of government as Congress does its constitutional job of oversight.

We do not know where all of the skeletons are in the closet. We do not know all of the abuses of law. We do not know of all of the fraudulent things that are going on in government. We need that information from whistleblowers, and the best evidence I can give you of that is the \$22 billion that has been brought back into the Federal Treasury since I got the False Claims Act of 1986 passed.

Most of that information would not have been available without the information from whistleblowers.

I yield the floor, and I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to a period of morning business with Senators allowed to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

OMNIBUS PUBLIC LANDS MANAGEMENT ACT

Mr. UDALL of Colorado. Mr. President, I express my strong support for

the bipartisan omnibus lands package, HR 146, which the Senate passed overwhelmingly in a floor vote. I thank Energy and Natural Resources Chairman BINGAMAN and Ranking Member MURKOWSKI for working across the aisle to put together this major piece of natural resources legislation. As many of our colleagues have noted, this legislation represents the largest public lands package in decades. Most importantly, this lands package represents a major victory for the people—and the lands—of Colorado.

There is much in this bill to highlight. All of the areas that are slated for protection under this legislation are deserving of such designation.

I have personally visited many of these places that we took action to preserve—places like Longs Peak, a mountain over 14,000 feet that looms over the great plains above Denver; the dramatic red rock canyons where water plunges to the Gunnison River from the Dominguez Canyons; and trails that climb up the steep rocky slopes of Colorado's northern Front Range looking out over the expanse of prairie that reaches to the eastern horizon.

These lands represent a variety of landscapes and natural attributes. They typify the diversity of our Nation, and their dramatic environments inspire visitors and give them a sense that anything is possible.

The connection we have to our natural landscapes and other equally important provisions—such as providing a funding mechanism for a water conduit that will help provide clean water to help enhance the productivity of farms and ranches along the lower Arkansas River—underscore why this bill is so important and worthy of our support. The areas and vital resources that are protected in this bill will help ensure a vibrant and healthy environment and thereby provide a solid foundation for a healthy and vibrant economy. This bill is not just about the special places it encompasses it is about us and our values. It deserves our support.

Specifically for Coloradans, this package will help preserve and protect majestic public landscapes in Colorado and help provide needed water supplies to communities and farmers on Colorado's productive Eastern Plains. These are issues on which I have worked for many years in the U.S. House of Representatives and now in the Senate. On behalf of the people of Colorado, I am proud that the following provisions will likely become law in the coming days.

First, the bill includes the Arkansas Valley Conduit Act of 2009. This legislation will help protect the water supply for the Arkansas River Valley's communities and productive agricultural lands by advancing the construction of the long-planned Arkansas Valley Conduit. The depressed economic status of southeastern Colorado made it a difficult financial undertaking for the region, a challenge that continues